

# Record

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## Conf. encourages, motivates participants

Tony Martin, Associate Editor  
and William Perkins Jr., Editor

Mississippi Baptist pastors, staff, and laypersons gathered at Colonial Heights Church, Jackson, on January 21-22 for the 2002 State Evangelism Conference sponsored by the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB). According to Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the MBCB, this was the best evangelism conference in years.

Those attending were challenged, encouraged, and inspired by a diverse group of speakers and musicians. One innovation this year was the use of the Mississippi vocational evangelists, who planned and presented the January 21 morning session.

R. L. and Beth Sigrest, music evangelists from Yazoo City, led worship Monday afternoon. Junior Hill, evangelist from Hartselle, Ala., began the session with a sermon from Matt. 6. Hill used the passage on the lilies of the field to explain that God doesn't want people to pretend to be something they are not.

Fred Lowery, pastor of First Church, Bossier City, La., continued the January 21 afternoon session with a message from Acts 18:9-11. His sermon, aimed specifically at pastors, illustrated the need for supernatural power. "Keep on speaking and do not be silent," Lowery exhorted. "Don't be silenced by sin, Satan, or society," he said.

One highlight of the January 21 afternoon session was the presentation of certificates to the top ten churches and associations in baptisms. Crossgates Church, Brandon, led the state in baptisms with 311; Rankin Association led among the associations with 1,253 baptisms recorded.

Nelson Price, pastor emeritus of Roswell Street Church in Marietta, Ga., capped off the January 21 afternoon session with a message from John 14. "I don't marvel that there is but one way to heaven," said Price, "I marvel that there is any way."

Price encouraged the conferees by saying, "We don't work for victory; we work from victory."

The January 21 evening session began with music and worship by the choir of Colonial Heights Church. The first message was delivered by Len Turner, evangelist from Woodstock, Ga. Turner shared his testimony, using Isaiah 42:1-4 as a framework.

Turner spoke frankly of his burnout and time in a Rapha treatment center in Atlanta. "One factor contributing to my condition was that I lost my daily, intimate relationship with Christ," Turner said. "God doesn't have favorites, but he does have intimates."

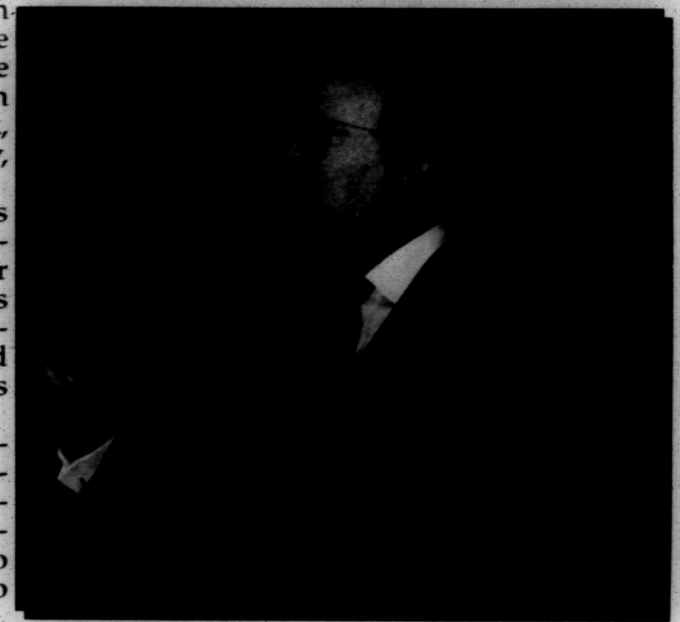
Junior Hill delivered the final message of the day. Using Paul's experience with the thorn in his flesh spoken of in 2 Cor. 12:7, Hill told the conferees, "Failure turns exaltation into humiliation. Thorns turn foes into friends, because when I am weak, then I am strong."

The January 22 morning session was led by the Mississippi Baptist vocational evangelists. In a fast-paced and well-received session, music and worship was provided by Monte Faith, Steve Walker, Ronnie Cottingham, and Myrna Hedgepeth. Messages were shared by Billy Smith, Tim Posey, and Charles Smith. Clark Stewart, pastor advisor to the vocational evangelists and pastor of Harmony Church, Crystal Springs, encouraged the conferees to use evangelists in their churches.

Mac Brunson, pastor of First Church, Dallas, along with Turner and Price, shared in the January 22 afternoon session. Brunson chose as his text Eph. 6:12 and following.

Focusing on the helmet of salvation, Brunson said, "We're in the [spiritual] battle but not of the spiritual battle because we are the battlefield."

Turner, preaching from 2 Sam. 4, stated, "My ministry is a ministry of grace and restoration. God doesn't want to change your circumstances as much as he wants to change your character."



TEXAS COMES TO MISSISSIPPI — Mac Brunson, pastor of First Church, Dallas, Tex., preaches at the January 21 afternoon session of the 2002 Mississippi State Evangelism Conference. (Photo by Tony Martin)

Price, using Eph. 1 as his text, developed his message along the theme of predestination and election. In a challenging sermon, Price stated, "God uses election to save as many people as possible. The triune God made a choice in the matter of salvation before creation. He chose to neither coerce anyone to salvation, nor prevent anyone from being saved. Man in his free will must decide whether or not to be in Jesus Christ."

Fred Lowery preached on Christian marriage, referring to the problem of divorce in the church. Describing the rising divorce rates of ministers, church staff, and lay leaders, Lowery said, "The elephant in the room is the (troubled) marriages of our pastors and staff members. Deacons divorced. We don't talk about that," he said.

"Covenant marriage is God's original plan. Divorce is a sin to avoid," he said, utilizing Gen. 2 as his text.

He offered six ingredients for the type of marriage God wants: Christ, covenant, companionship, communication, conflict management, and continual work.

Mac Brunson preached from Romans 8, asking "How can we know God works all things together?"

"God always knows where the pieces go," he said, using the example of a jigsaw puzzle. "Our lives will not be frustrated. God's plan will not be thwarted."

The Mississippi Singing Churchmen provided special music for the January 22 evening session. L. Graham Smith, director of church music for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, served as worship leader.



A JOYFUL NOISE — The Colonial Heights choir leads in musical worship during the January 21 evening session of the 2002 Mississippi State Evangelism Conference. The choir is under the direction of Larry Kulke, music minister at the church. (Photo by Tony Martin)

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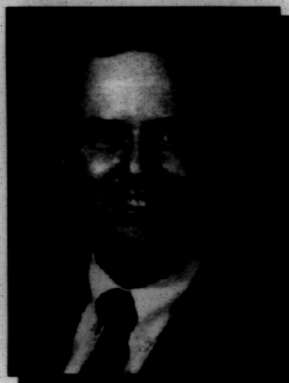
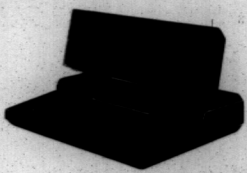
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# The next John Walker Lindh

**B**y now just about everyone has heard of John Walker Lindh, also known as the "American Taliban." He was discovered, wounded and dirty, among Taliban terrorists rounded up in the aftermath of a bloody prison riot in Afghanistan. He had grown his hair and beard long according to the medieval dictates of his radical Islamist masters, and he was barely recognizable as a light-skinned Caucasian of European descent.

He was quickly separated from the other prisoners and eventually whisked away to a U.S. Navy ship. Over the past several weeks, he has recuperated there while being questioned by American authorities. A few days ago, he was flown to the United States for the first of what will be many court appearances.

Why did John Walker Lindh, raised in one of the wealthiest, most urbane areas of the country — Marin County just outside San Francisco — decide to turn against the system that had showered him with fortune and privilege? How did he find himself so immersed in radical Islamic thought that he vanished into the dark world of international terrorism?

Many of the questions about John Walker Lindh have yet to be answered. A look at the emptiness of his early life, however, may yield a few clues.

Lindh's family could be considered upper middle class, possibly in the higher reaches of that lifestyle. His father is a lawyer. He certainly did not lack for material comforts in Marin County, which contains some of the priciest real estate in the nation.

For all the privilege of his young life, however, Lindh's soul was troubled. He was pretty much left alone to raise himself, by his hippie parents' admission. A child of divorce, Lindh seemed to be constantly searching for an anchor he could never find.

His parents even enrolled him in an unusual school in which the students set their own academic agenda and check in with a teacher only once a week.

No one ever gave the child John Walker Lindh any guidance on what he should do with his life. His parents, his teachers, and the other adults who meant anything to him were either too self-absorbed or too New Age (or both) to help him on his journey toward adulthood.

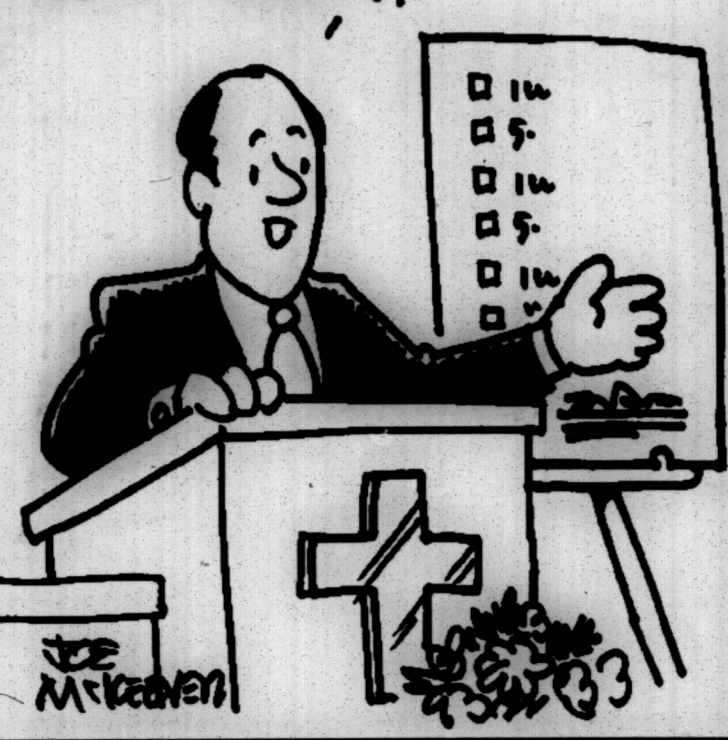
With no experience or training or guidance, his hungry soul went searching for sustenance. He thought he had found that for which he was searching when he came across Islam.

He switched to a Muslim name. In Pakistan he fell under the spell of more radical Islamists, who began preparing him to participate in the destruction of his own country and setting him out on his fateful journey to the terrorist camps of Afghanistan.

Virtually all the people who could have made a difference in Lindh's life failed him. It is not known if he ever had a real opportunity to accept the eternal salvation found in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Perhaps if he had known Jesus, he would have known the peace he so desperately sought. For want of a witness, a bright young life has been wasted.

In too many of our churches, youth programs get short shrift. While Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action struggle for want of adult leadership, budget committees look at tight finances and ask, "Can

**"AREN'T WE GLAD MOSES  
WAS NOT TOO BUSY TO  
LEAD A GROUP TO THE  
HOLY LAND?!"**



we afford these programs?" The answer is simple. We can't afford not to have these programs. You can be certain there are more John Walker Lindhs adrift out there, and they need to hear the Good News before it's too late. So, what will be your answer when you're next asked to serve as a youth leader? What will you do when you're asked to support these programs with your tithes and offerings? Will you make yourself available to teach Vacation Bible School this year?

The next John Walker Lindh is awaiting your answer.

### PART 2 OF 3

**P**ostmodernism. What does it have to do with Christian ministry in the new century? Most everything. Postmodernism is affecting those who make up the rolls of Southern Baptist churches in Mississippi, as we live in a culture that is becoming more and more postmodern.

Last week I wrote that modernists believed rational thought was the ultimate way to arrive at truth. We need to be logical, but modernists carried it to the extreme. They rejected faith (since it is "illogical") and declared "God is dead."

Modernism attempted to build a future around the progress of man while denying the existence of God, yet it failed to realize that people could not be satisfied with a spiritual void in their heart. Modernity left people spiritually bankrupt and searching.

Modernism involved construction which means to give things meaning. Postmodernism is based on deconstruction or questioning meaning. Postmodernists emphatically reject the idea of absolute truth or universal morals (which is ironic, because to claim there is no absolute truth is an absolute statement).

Most everything is now being debated and reexamined because postmodernity challenges everything that was thought to be true.

## GUEST OPINION:



### Postmodernism: Should we care?

*By Will McRaney, Asst. Prof. of Evang.  
New Orleans Seminary*

The problem is, postmodernism also leaves people spiritually bankrupt. People are trying to now foolishly reconstruct their broken lives with experience as the final arbitrator of truth.

People are searching. According to a 1997 Today poll, 46% of the men and 40% of the women in the U.S. are "searching for the meaning and purpose of life." However, that search has moved beyond the local Christian church. Self help books, community groups, and false religions have replaced the Bible, Christian small groups, and the church as places to discover God and community.

The church's place in society has been called into question, its message is not understood, and therefore most every aspect of church is being affected. Ron Hutchcraft said, "A lot of people are not rejecting our Christ, they are rejecting our vocabulary, they have no idea what we are talking

about." As a group they do not understand our message, and it is our fault to large degree.

So, all of our channels of communicating our message must be examined for clarity. This impacts our approaches to evangelism, preaching, and even our worship services.

One area changing greatly is personal evangelism. The following highlights a few of the shifts:

#### MODERNITY (involves more)

Single encounters  
One-way communication  
Spiritual "laws" than  
personal story  
Giving lots of information  
Argumentation  
Highlight eternal benefits

#### POSTMODERNITY (involves more)

Multiple encounters  
Two-way dialogue  
Personal story then spiritual  
principles

Asking good questions  
Consideration  
Highlight earthly benefits

How people hear and receive our messages, both verbal and nonverbal, has changed because postmodern filters are different. Words are no longer enough. It is no longer enough to speak the truth in Sunday School or proclaim the message from the pulpit; we must live and communicate our message effectively, remembering it is fruitless to blame the receivers if our message fails to get through.

It has been said, "I can't hear you because your actions are speaking too loudly." I would suggest that in a postmodern culture, Christians communicate with the sensitivities of a foreigner in a foreign mission field. Jesus said they would know the truth by our love.

It is worth the effort to learn about postmodernism and to care about its impact? Absolutely. God is not dead. He created and loves the postmodern people in today's culture! According to his Word, we should, too!

*McRaney will lead the Pastor and Staff Workshop February 11 at First Church, Richland. Questions for the workshop may be submitted to McRaney via e-mail at questions@MEGnet.org.*



# Wehmeyer: faith keeps career in perspective

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP) — Talking about faith can be challenging. Talking about faith in front of 50 million viewers can be terrifying, but not so for Peggy Wehmeyer.

Until recently, the first national religion correspondent for a major news network (ABC) had blazed a trail in religious news for more than 20 years, bringing informative and objective news coverage to religious and faith-based stories.

Citing budget cutbacks, ABC informed Wehmeyer last summer that the religion beat she covered was being eliminated and her contract, up in October, would not be renewed.

While Wehmeyer admitted in a telephone interview with Baptist Press that she is enjoying the extra time at home in Dallas being with her husband and their two daughters, she thinks it is unfortunate that there is no religion beat with the national networks.

"There's a lack of diversity when it comes to religious belief and ideology particularly in the newsrooms of the Northeast and in national news, which has an impact on the coverage of religion," Wehmeyer said. "As much attention as the media gives to make sure that there's representation and diversity in the area of race, gender, and even sexual orientation, I think it's time for the media to pay attention to ideological diversity, especially when it comes to religion."

It is that strong conviction for coverage of faith-based stories that was the kindling for Wehmeyer's career.

Growing up in a home with a secular Jewish mother and a father who was a "sometimes-practicing" Christian Scientist,



Wehmeyer

Wehmeyer didn't understand a lot about God until she was a college student at the University of Texas at Austin.

Through her involvement with Campus Crusade for Christ on campus, Wehmeyer began studying the Bible and eventually became a Christian. Her newfound faith answered a lot of questions for her about the purpose and meaning of life, Wehmeyer said, and also helped shape her future career choice — journalism.

"Journalism just seemed to maximize my strengths and minimize my weaknesses," Wehmeyer said, "and it was such a great fit for my new faith, which is about exposing the truth for light, fairness, and honesty — all the tenets of journalism and reporting."

"My own faith had changed my life so much that I was very

interested in spiritual things," she said. "To me, journalism allowed me to have a job where I could speak the truth, do research, study and learn things, and remain consistent with my faith practice."

After she started writing for her college newspaper, however, Wehmeyer began noticing the lack of coverage for stories on religion and faith, a disturbing trend that she continued to observe as a public information officer at Dallas Theological Seminary while she was taking classes there.

What was covered, she felt, was being distorted, and people of faith were being misrepresented and misunderstood by the media.

"I thought, 'Wow, here's an area that nobody's covering and when it is covered, it's not covered well,'" Wehmeyer said,

"and I felt like with the gifts and skills I had, that this was a niche I could fill."

After persistent conversations with the news directors at WFAA-TV in Dallas, she was eventually allowed to report on the religious stories she was pitching, mainly because no one else would do them. Covering religious and social issues for the station for more than 10 years, Wehmeyer's thought-provoking and passionate reporting on stories of faith and human nature was soon noticed by ABC News.

In 1994, she was hired as the first national religion correspondent at a major network, and during her eight years there she earned the respect and admiration of many Christians in America, landing several exclusives with septuplet parents Kenny and Bobbi McCaughey.

Through the good times and bad, Wehmeyer said it is her faith and her relationship with God that have seen her through.

"I would say my faith was certainly challenged. In a job where you are interviewing leaders on both sides of major religious controversial issues like abortion or gay rights and you're

trying to be fair, there were times that my faith was rattled and challenged," Wehmeyer said, "but my faith was also strengthened as well, and it helped keep everything in perspective and my priorities in order with my family and my marriage."

Although people told her she would miss being in the spotlight and would feel lost without the high-profile job to which she had become accustomed, Wehmeyer said she has found that the opposite has taken place.

"I'm just as pleased being a stay-at-home mom as I was speaking to 50 million people in primetime. What makes me glad is that it tells me that I struggled to stay in touch with what really mattered and who I was apart from TV," Wehmeyer said.

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## Mosque to be finished

JERUSALEM (BP) — President Bush and Pope John Paul II should mind their own business regarding the construction of a controversial mosque in Nazareth or there could be trouble there, the city's deputy mayor said Jan. 15, CNSNews.com reported. Both Bush and the pope have called on the Israeli government to rescind an earlier decision to permit the construction. They want to prevent the building of a mosque near the Basilica of the Annunciation, where tradition says the Angel Gabriel visited Mary with the news that she would bear the promised Messiah, Jesus. Observers here say that Israel is in a very tight spot. If it prevents the mosque construction, the Islamic world could be inflamed even more than it is against Israel. If it allows the construction, the Christian world and the West will be angry. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon appointed a committee in early January to come up with an alternative plan within 14 days for building the mosque, where the foundations have already been laid without a building permit. "I'm totally against building a mosque there," Sharon told a gathering of foreign reporters. "We appointed a committee that should provide us with an answer to this issue within a short time." Several years ago, when the issue first came up, Sharon as Israel's National Infrastructure minister, offered an alternative solution and warned against giving permission for the mosque to be built in that spot. "We were ready to provide land and everything which is needed in order to build a mosque [at another location in Nazareth]," Sharon said. A demonstration in favor of the mosque construction was held on Jan. 18 and some 10,000 people prayed in Nazareth on Friday, Jan. 17, the Muslim holy day.

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

Charles and Kathy Thomas, Southern Baptist missionaries for 17 years, resign from service in Romania to express their opposition to what they term a hostile takeover of the Foreign Mission Board by leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention.

### 20 years ago

Roy Lee Honeycutt Jr., a native Mississippian, is elected president of Southern Baptists' oldest seminary, Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Honeycutt succeeds Duke K. McCall, who retired after serving as president of the seminary since 1951.

### 50 years ago

Len Turner, a student at Mississippi College, is ordained to the Gospel ministry by the Straight Bayou Church. A. E. Lucas, his pastor, and pastor of the Louise Church in Holmes County, preached the sermon and presented him an ordination Bible.



# IMB leaders urge Baptists to 'stay focused'

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — Southern Baptists sent 1,155 new missionaries overseas during 2001, a "phenomenal 28% increase" over the previous high — 902 new workers — two years ago, Jerry Rankin told International Mission Board (IMB) trustees during a Jan. 21-23 meeting in Birmingham, Ala.

Volunteers who did not let Sept. 11 deter them from overseas service were motivated by their passion for a lost world, said Avery Willis, the board's senior vice president of overseas operations.

"This is not the time to not go. This is the time to advance," Willis said. "By the grace of God, we need Southern Baptists to step up to the plate and say, 'We're going to take the cross right to the heart of the lostness of this world.'"

The challenge for the IMB in 2002 is to stay focused, Rankin told the trustees.

"It's not a matter of constantly creating a new vision or strategic thrust and keeping people off balance by constant change," Rankin said. "We must recognize that God is the author of our vision to lead Southern Baptists to be on mission with God to bring all the people of the world to a saving faith with Jesus Christ."

"As we are constantly confronted with day-to-day issues, it is easy to be diverted and lose perspective on what is driving us," he said. "There is a tendency to be manipulated by denominational politics, public opinion, or the latest fad in missions strategy, but we must never forget that what it is all about is the lostness of the world and a passion for God's glory among the nations," Rankin said.

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, Southern Baptists have "a unique opportunity to impact the disillusioned Muslim world and break down that last stronghold of resistance to global evangelism," Rankin said.

The turmoil following the attacks has created "a new and renewed interest on the part of Muslims in knowing what [Christians] are all about," Willis said. "We feel like this is the time not only in Central Asia but all over the Muslim world."

In response, the board will be launching an ambitious multi-year project called "Beyond the Wall," designed to give every Muslim the opportunity to know "the truth

of Jesus Christ in a culturally relevant manner," said Clyde Meador, associate vice president in overseas operations.

Among other things, Beyond the Wall will intensify and coordinate existing efforts among Muslims and create new audio and video resources built around chronological Bible storying material, Meador said. The hope is that overcoming Muslim misconceptions about Christian faith will help spark church-planting movements among people groups in the Muslim world.

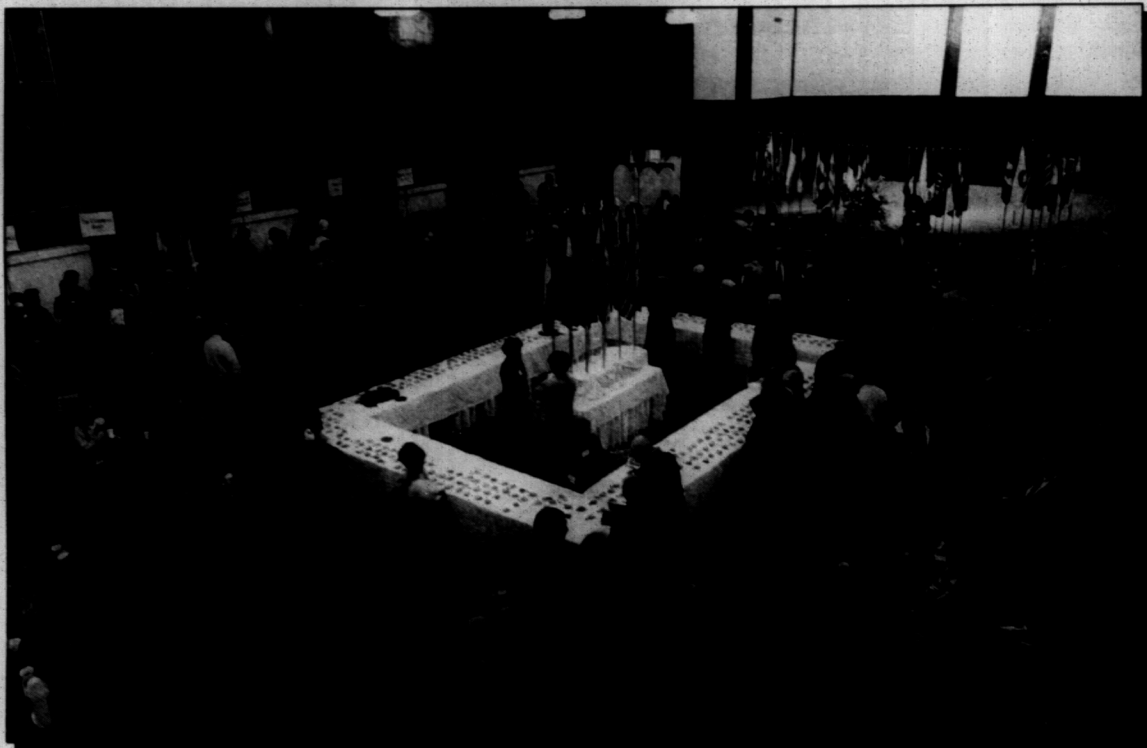
A highlight of the meeting was the appointment of 63 new overseas workers during a Jan. 22 service at Shades Mountain Baptist Church. Nearly 3,000 people defied cold, rainy weather to pay tribute to the appointees. In other business during the three-day meeting:

- Milton Steck, chairman of the finance committee, announced the receipt of gifts to the IMB from three estates totaling \$610,812.64. Steck also said the IMB received a gift of stock to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering totaling approximately \$1.8 million.

- Sam James, the IMB's vice president for leadership development since 1994, and his wife, Rachel, were honored for 40 years of missionary service. The Jameses were appointed as missionaries to South Vietnam in 1962, until the communist takeover in 1975. Since then, he has developed and directed the board's missionary training program and served as a regional director for East Asia and vice president for Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.

- Trustees approved a recommendation to streamline the appointment process for missionary apprentices by formally appointing them at the beginning of their terms and then changing their status to career or associate after the successful completion of their apprenticeships.

- Trustees responded to a request from a messenger to the 2001 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting to review the agency's policy on appointing divorced people as career missionaries. Trustees voted to affirm their existing policy of declining to appoint career missionaries who are divorced, noting that channels of missionary service already exist for people with divorce in their backgrounds.



**MISSIONS FELLOWSHIP** — Alabama Baptists had an opportunity to meet 63 new Southern Baptist missionaries after a Jan. 22 International Mission Board appointment service at Shades Mountain Church in Birmingham. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)

Those new workers brought the total number of long-term missionaries on the field to more than 5,100, Rankin said. That number included 361 career and associate missionaries, the most ever appointed in one year.

Rankin also offered encouraging news in reporting on the total of volunteers working in missions. Though many short-term volunteers canceled their overseas projects after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the total number of volunteers for 2001 still exceeded the 31,000 that served in overseas missions projects in 2000, Rankin said.

The 33,700 volunteers serving overseas during 2001 almost doubled the 17,423 recorded four years ago, said Bill Cashion, the IMB's human needs consultant. Youth and collegiate volunteers were 22 % of the total.

## Chapman: new convention shouldn't collect CP

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A breakaway Baptist convention in Missouri should not be authorized by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to collect funds from churches for Cooperative Program (CP) supported SBC missions and ministry entities, Morris H. Chapman, SBC Executive Committee president has informed one of the leaders of the proposed convention.

"I cannot recommend the Southern Baptist Convention enter into a relationship with your proposed new Baptist state convention in Missouri whereby you would collect Cooperative Program gifts to forward to us," Chapman wrote in a Jan. 25 letter to Jim Hill, who resigned last October as executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention in a climate of disagreement with the convention's executive board.

The full text of Chapman's letter to Hill is posted on the SBC's Baptist2Baptist website, [www.baptist2baptist.net](http://www.baptist2baptist.net).

Hill was among the leaders

of a recent information and planning meeting about a new convention for Baptist moderates. The Jan. 17 meeting in Sedalia, Mo., was attended by 350 moderates from about 100 of the 2,000 churches in the Missouri Baptist Convention.

"A state convention is to be in 'friendly cooperation' with the Southern Baptist Convention," Chapman wrote in his letter to Hill, referencing a key principle of Southern Baptist cooperation.

"The Missouri Baptist Convention remains our Cooperative Program collection agent for Baptist churches in Missouri. It continues to act faithfully in regard to promoting the ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention among Baptists in Missouri and forwards Cooperative Program gifts for national and international causes exclusively to the Southern Baptist Convention," Chapman wrote.

The leaders of the proposed "Baptist Convention of

Missouri," however, hold "sentiments I would be hard-pressed to interpret as in 'friendly cooperation' with the purposes and work of the Southern Baptist Convention," Chapman wrote.

"The Southern Baptist Convention is not perfect nor should we be exempt from criticism and differing opinions," Chapman wrote. "We are, however, generally pleased with our direction, our confession, our leaders, and our emphases. To allow a group that is so openly in disagreement with the SBC to collect our CP gifts from the churches implies some kind of endorsement of the group's point of view."

"We do not wish to send mixed signals to the churches in Missouri, nor do we wish to harm the work of the Missouri Baptist Convention or the Southern Baptist Convention."

The proposed Baptist Convention of Missouri, which is slated to hold its inaugural meeting in mid-April, plans to

incorporate "practices contrary to the best interests of the Southern Baptist Convention," Chapman also noted, citing plans for the proposed convention to establish several giving plans, not all of which would be related to the SBC.

The breakaway convention "will openly welcome relationships with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a group known for actively encouraging Southern Baptist churches to discontinue support for our convention's work," Chapman wrote.

Chapman told Baptist Press, "Jim's request is a first of its kind. In two other states [Virginia and Texas] a second state convention was formed only after the original state conventions had corrupted the historic meaning of the Cooperative Program" by establishing funding channels apart from the traditional SBC-state convention relationship.

Leaders for the new Missouri convention could not be reached for comment by press deadline for this issue.



THIS "STARTER" WOULD BE BETTER IF IT WERE A "STOPPER"

Several months ago I heard a person, just in conversation, refer to "starter" marriages. In the context of the conversation, I understood what he was talking about.

I really thought it was just a passing "quirk of a thought" and actually dismissed it thinking, "This will never, ever catch on, and 'starter' marriages will never become a part of our language or our society."

Well, I was absolutely wrong! More and more we are hearing people talk about "starter" marriages, and what is even worse, we are seeing it lived out in our nation.

What are "starter" marriages? They are those marriages that start and then conclude in divorce within five years. In fact, that time period continues to drop and many people are characterizing them as marriages that end within two years.

Actually, it is not uncommon to find these marriages over in less than a one-year cycle. Others have described this phenomenon as "Marriage with Training Wheels," or "Trial Marriages."

Supposedly, in the minds of some who are pro "starter" marriage, it is actually a good thing. They reason that people are able to give it a try, see some of the trouble spots, experience some of the awkwardness, and then punt and try again.

One lady, Jane Buchanan, who has tracked many of these marriages and speaks favorably of the experience, says that it is a "victimless crime." She believes that, in light of the fact that most of these marriages do not result in having children, no harm is done.

Still, two lives have been altered, dreams have been shattered, and all of the relatives and in-laws are now faced with re-adjustment of their relationships. Divorce always leaves in its wake a long list of victims.

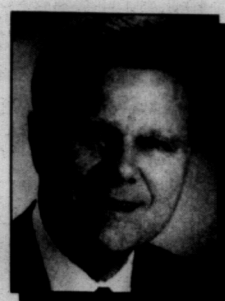
In all fairness, I have never heard of one of these folks who went into the marriage with the intent of "bailing out" in a year to 18 months, or beyond. However, since it is happening with such frequency, let's give it a name, and if it happens often enough, we will call it "normal."

This new twist only heightens our awareness of the mess marriage is in or the dilemma of divorce in America.

Equal to this strange new twist, I suppose, is the revelation that more and more the pattern of broken marriages in the church is about the same as outside the church.

Some studies even indicate that the percentage of people in the church divorcing may be slightly higher than people outside of a religious faith.

Whether or not anyone listens, someone needs to state the true facts about marriage. Time, nor space, will allow me to include everything that could or should be said, but I would like to emphasize two or three things:



# Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

• **Marriage is of God.** It is not just a human institution for us to define "good feelings." It is an arrangement of God for us to sustain one another, to bless his work, and to be blessed by his goodness. It was the Lord himself who knew what we needed and instituted this glorious relationship.

• **Marriage is designed by God.** He not only came up with the idea, the Lord knew how to make it work.

It may sound old-fashioned to say that God designed marriage as one man and one woman, sharing life "till death do us part." Our culture chuckles at the thought and then proceeds to throw that concept out the door and replace it with what we have today.

Before anyone laughs at or mocks what God instructed, just take a moment to think about the substitute that is now in place.

Literally, by the millions, we are watching young people grow up in a one-parent existence after a terrible and traumatic breakup of a mom and dad.

Consider this: on the day that we now recognize as one of the pivotal, defining moments in American history, September 11, 2001, over 3,000 people died in the attack and collapse of the World Trade Center.

On the same day, over 3,000 homes died! Every day (365 days) in America over 3,000 divorces take place. Quietly, with little notice or fanfare, homes are killed simply by the decree of the court in a divorce. The design of God is ignored. The design of self is embraced and thousands and thousands of children are bewildered.

A few decades ago, some of the wise people who are supposed to know everything were saying that the children would bounce back. They said kids were resilient and would go on with life almost unaffected by the bruises, breaks, rips, and tears that come from divorce.

Now, more and more, we are discovering that that is not true at all! It might be better stated that those children never recover and for a lifetime carry the scars and fears of divorce.

• **The strength of marriage is commitment.** Usually when people talk about marriage, they talk about being in love. They believe their love will sustain them. The only problem with that thinking is:

1. Most of them do not know what love really is. They think love is only a feeling.
2. They do not understand

that the real strength of a marriage is in the commitment before God. Out of that commitment comes genuine love, care, sacrifice, and investment in someone else.

Apart from that commitment, love dwindles into a lustful moment of enjoyment and that will not sustain a marriage.

Anyone who does not bring to his or her mate a commitment of, "I will be with you, and I will not fail you, nor will I betray you," is bringing less than what it will take to carry you through.

You can mark this down, that while many marriages in

America lack that dimension, there are some who bring to the moment and into the unfolding years, a covenant with God that commits them to each other making a real marriage possible.

A good marriage, a godly marriage, a marriage that produces joy, strength, and hope, and an adventure for life is still available in the Lord.

After 3,000 people died in the terrorist attack, America turned to launch its own attack against the destroyers. With passion, purpose, and resolve, America has gone after those who sought to destroy.

When the 3,000 families died on that same day, no one raised an eyebrow, not a voice was heard, and not one counter-attack was launched! Consequently, the next day, 3,000 more families died; and the next day, 3,000 more; and the next, and the next.

God help us to stop "starter" marriages and to start "strong" marriages that are built and sustained by God himself.

## World Hunger Fund is focus of event

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — On Super Bowl Sunday, churches across the nation will raise money for the poor by participating in the "Souper Bowl of Caring." Meanwhile, Southern Baptists will be given an additional opportunity to raise money for the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund.

Southern Baptists are being urged to donate \$1 in large soup pots as they leave church on Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 3, said Steve Nelson, Southern Baptists' director of hunger concerns and a staff member of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC).

One hundred percent of the money raised among Baptists will go directly to the World Hunger Fund, which supports ministry evangelism initiatives across the nation and world led by Southern Baptists.

"We want to specifically challenge youth groups and churches to take part in this Souper Bowl of Caring emphasis," Nelson said.

The Souper Bowl of Caring is a non-denominational grassroots effort to raise awareness and funding for hunger ministries across the nation. The ministry was founded in 1990 by Presbyterian minister Brad Smith. Since then, more than 8,600 congregations have participated in the annual event, including 600 Baptist churches in 1998.

The gifts do not go to the Souper Bowl organization, Nelson noted. Instead, individual congregations determine where to use the money for ministry.



APPEAL FOR NEEDY — Steve Nelson (left), director of hunger concerns at the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, talks with Michael Black of Jackson, a member of Parkway Church, Clinton, after Nelson preached at the church on answering the needs of the poor. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Nelson said the Souper Bowl ministry's lone request is to call their office with the results. The ERLC staffer said Souper Bowl is a perfect opportunity to promote the Southern Baptist Convention's World Hunger Fund.

"I want to encourage each church to embrace this opportunity to support the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund in addition to local hunger ministries," Nelson said. "Hunger exists everywhere though we are often unaware of it in our own communities. A few canned goods that we will never miss can mean the difference for a child between a good meal and going hungry."

"It is not my desire that anyone give their tithes or offerings to the hunger fund. Those go to the local church, but in keeping with Leviticus 19:9-10, we can make a portion of our abundance available for those in need through an effort just like this."

"If every Southern Baptist gave just \$1 per month to the World Hunger Fund, hunger gifts would multiply 18-fold."

This past year, the domestic portion of hunger funds was totally depleted, Nelson said. "It is time for the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund to occupy a place of prominence in Southern Baptist life," Nelson added.

"We cannot hope to see the world reached if we fail to demonstrate Christ's love while we speak of his love," he pointed out.

To participate in the Souper Bowl Sunday event, call 1-800-358-SOUP or Nelson at (615) 244-2495 or email Nelson at world-hunger@erlc.com.





**RA's of First Church, Raymond,** raised \$145 for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

The missions development committee of North Central Association has invited Thomas and June Nolan, Ukraine fieldside coordinators,

to speak at Friendship Church, North Grenada, on Feb. 4 at 7 p.m. For further information, call Friendship Church at (662) 226-4658 or Larry W. Yarber, pastor of Cowart Church, Charleston, at (662) 647-5271.

**Women: God's Unique Gift,** is the theme of the Women's Conference 2002 that will be held Feb. 8 and 9 at First Church, Columbia. The keynote speaker is Florence Littauer. For more information, call the church at (601) 736-2608.

**Children of Rawls Springs Church, Hattiesburg,** distributed fruit baskets to the sick and shut-ins of the community. They sang carols and shared the Christmas spirit during the month of December.

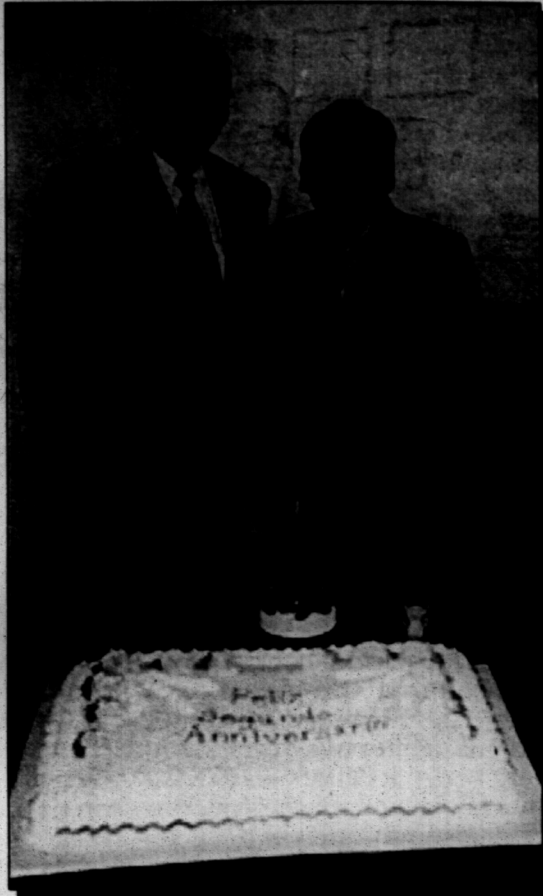


Children of Rawls Springs Church, Hattiesburg

**The Primera Mision Bautista de Panola, Batesville,** celebrated its second anniversary on Jan. 5. The mission was established to provide church services for the Spanish-speaking people in the area. Three churches in Panola County support the mission. English classes are provided two days per week, and services are held three times weekly. Pictured (from left) are Tino Trevino, pastor, and Rocky Tzib, Pontotoc.

**Corinth Church, Lamar Association,** will have a special service on Sunday, Feb. 3, in dedication and honor of David Strebeck's 50th year in the ministry and second anniversary at Corinth Church. Lunch will be served after the morning service with a reception following lunch.

**Mt. Nelson Church, Neshoba Association,** reached out to missions in 2001. "Each of the 40 members made a sacrificial effort in exceeding the church's goal set for International, North American,



Trevino and Tzib

and State Missions with a goal of \$400," said Mack Alford, pastor. The church also aided the Baptist Children's Village, Gideons International, Operation Christmas Child, and was instrumental in starting a Spanish Bible Study for Neshoba County.



## YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. *(I have sinned.)*
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. *(I repent.)*
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. *(I believe in Jesus.)*
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. *(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)*

*But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).*

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## 'A Walk to Remember' breaking new ground

PASADENA, Calif. (ABP) — "A Walk to Remember," a new movie creating a stir in Christian media, is breaking new ground not only in Hollywood's portrayal of Christians on screen, but also in unprecedented recognition of the audience potential of the faith community.

The movie, released Jan. 25, stars 17-year-old multi-platinum recording artist Mandy Moore playing a Baptist preacher's daughter. That's right, a known and open Christian character is the movie's centerpiece.

Moore's character, Jamie, is portrayed in a flattering light. She is prudent, smart, and willing to live according to her faith, even if she's made fun of for it. The audience is encouraged to emulate Jamie's character and her life seems to be consistent with the Bible she carries.

For these reasons the movie, which is based on the novel by Nicholas Sparks (author of "Message in a Bottle") is being marketed to Christian audiences like no release by a major studio ever before.

Producer Denise Di Novi said she even had to show Warner Bros. Statistical evidence that a large Christian audience exists before the studio would agree to make the film.

Executives hope Jamie's character will be attractive enough to Christians to bring in

big box office profits. The studio certainly has gone to extreme lengths to get the word out to Christians.

"This is the broadest and largest campaign targeting Christians ever by a major studio," Di Novi said.

It remains to be seen whether the gamble will pay off among the audience normally drawn to Christian films, however. While "A Walk to Remember" clearly affirms Jamie's beliefs, it never fully explains what those beliefs are. Jamie carries a Bible with her to class, but the name of Jesus is never mentioned in the movie. Landon — a bad boy in the movie — is transformed into a better person. He gives the glory not to God, but to Jamie and the "faith" she had in him.

The publicity campaign included special screenings for Focus on the Family and a Christian radio advertising campaign. A Christian publicist, Jonathon Bock of Grace Hill Media, was hired to help create a buzz in the Christian media. Bock even viewed early cuts of the movie, at one point advising that several curse words be removed so as not to offend Christian audiences.

In the boldest move to target the Christian audience, the studio sponsored a Bible study based on "A Walk to Remember." About a month before the movie opened,

the study was sent to about 10,000 youth pastors around the country, along with a movie promotion kit.

The Bible study recommends that youth leaders hang the "A Walk to Remember" movie poster that came with the study.

Then, it says they should show the promotional trailer to their youth group and encour-

age kids to bring their friends when the youth group sees the movie. Information for ordering group tickets, naturally, is included.

Di Novi said "A Walk to Remember" is not a Christian movie, but a film for young people with a Christian character. She said the first aim of the film is to be a hit and make money.



## AFTER 33 YEARS OF MINISTRY AT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN SHREVEPORT, LA

Bro. W.D. "Step" Martin is retiring on March 10, 2002

A special service recognizing Bro. Step's ministry will be held at the Bossier Civic Center in Bossier City, LA.

The service will begin at 10 a.m.

The membership of Calvary Baptist Church invites you to share in the celebration of this ministry.

For more information, please feel free to contact Calvary Baptist Church at (318) 687-4920.





## NAMES IN THE NEWS



Homan, Hester, Shumaker, and Hamilton

**Pleasant Grove Church, Shannon**, recently held deacon ordination services for Clinton Hester. Pictured (from left) are Elkin Homan, chairman of deacons; Hester; Chuck Shumaker, pastor; and Mack Hamilton, deacon.

**Gary Bowlin**, evangelist, has joined East McComb Church, McComb, as staff evangelist. He can be contacted through the church by calling (601) 684-1851 or directly at Gary Bowlin Evangelistic Association, P. O. Box 869, Summit MS 39666 or call (601) 276-7245. Ricky Kennedy is pastor of East McComb Church.



Bowlin

**Black Jack Church, Yazoo Association**, recently ordained David Shipp as deacon. Pictured (from left) are Donnie Pepper, chairman of deacons; Shipp and wife Cindy; and Louis Smith, pastor.



Pepper, the Shipp, and Smith

**Sam McRaney** was ordained as a deacon on Nov. 5 at Mt. Horeb Church, Collins. Pictured (from left) are John Reid, pastor; McRaney with his wife Pat and daughter Anna.

**Dee DeBold** has recently completed an interim pastorate at Calvary Church, Tylertown, and is available for supply, interim, or a bivocational pastorate. DeBold is a Jackson native and graduate of New Orleans Seminary. He pastored full time for 20 years in Pennsylvania and Mississippi, and for seven years has pastored bivocationally in South Mississippi. DeBold may be reached at 1450 Barnes Circle, Monticello, MS 39654, (601) 587-7806, and debold@bellsouth.net.

**First Church of Chicora, Wayne Association**, ordained Alvin Cook, Kenneth Pope, David Hudson, and Arthur



Reid and the McRaneys

Lee Sturdivant as deacons on Jan. 20. Lynn O. Mackey, associational mission director, delivered the message. Pictured (from left) are David Roberson, pastor; Cook; Pope; Hudson; Sturdivant; and Mackey.



Deacons of First Church of Chicora, Wayne Association

### STAFF CHANGES

**Eagle Ridge Community Church, Raymond**, called its first pastor, **Bryan E. Presson**, on Sunday, Jan. 13. A bivocational minister, Presson was also ordained to the ministry at Morrison Heights Church,

Clinton, on the same day. Eagle Ridge Church, formed in January 2001, meets at the Baptist Student Union Center at Hinds Community College.

**Trace Ridge Church, Ridgeland**, has called **Richard Nettles** as senior pastor. Nettles, a native of Douglas, Ga., is a graduate of Southwestern Seminary. He previously served at Calvary Church, Monte Vista, Colo.



Nettles

**Calvary Church of Oak Grove, Hattiesburg**, has called **Jeff Floyd** as pastor effective Jan. 6. A graduate of William Carey College and Southwestern Seminary, he is currently working on his doctor of ministry degree at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson. Floyd previously served at Calvary Church, Greenwood.

**Randy Ashley**, former pastor of Holcomb Church, Holcomb, has been called as pastor of Lebanon Church, Falkville, Ala.

## G. W. Smith, minister, dies

G. W. Smith of Bogue Chitto, 82, died Jan. 12. Services were held Jan. 14 at Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto. Smith pastored churches in Mississippi for almost 50 years.

He is survived by his wife Lottie B. Smith, Bogue Chitto; son, Greg Smith, Bogue Chitto; daughter, Janell White, Columbia; sisters, Ruby Lee Corban, Baker, La., and Faye Wright, Baton Rouge, La.; five grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.



Smith

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## Revival date

**Glendale Church, Leland:**  
Feb. 10-15; 7 p.m. nightly;  
Randy Hamilton, Ripley,  
evangelist.



# Gender-neutral NIV stirring controversy

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A Jan. 28 news release announcing a Today's New International Version (TNIV) of the Bible reports that the translation entails a seven percent change from the widely used New International Version, or NIV, published by the International Bible Society (IBS) and Zondervan.

What the news release doesn't report is that IBS is "withdrawing its endorsement" of 1997 Bible translation guidelines that resulted from a heated controversy over IBS/Zondervan plans at the time to revise the NIV with gender-neutral language.

At the moment, it is impossible to determine the nature of the TNIV's gender-neutral wording. According to the IBS/Zondervan news release, "To introduce the TNIV, more than 50,000 copies of the New Testament are being sent to pastors, educators and other church leaders across the United States. Copies also are being distributed this week to retailers at the trade show in Indianapolis for Christian booksellers, CBA Expo."

Otherwise, "The TNIV translation of the New Testament will be available this spring, and the complete text with the Old Testament is expected in 2005."

The IBS shift away from the 1997 Bible translation accord, known as the Colorado Springs Guidelines (CSG), was noted in a Jan. 18 letter circulated to various evangelical leaders, including R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

The IBS now has difficulty with the part of the CSG involving "some very specific guidelines [about translation of gender-related terms] that those present generally agreed with, or at the time were willing to endorse," the IBS letter states, referencing a 1997 meeting convened by Focus on the Family founder James Dobson in Colorado Springs.

"However, upon further review and consideration, and in consultation with other evangelical scholars, IBS has determined that many of the technical guidelines are too restrictive to facilitate the most accurate possible text in contemporary English," the IBS letter states.

The IBS noted, with little publicity in 1999, that it was continuing to work on a new "inclusive" Bible translation reducing the amount of masculine language utilized in the popular NIV.

In its Jan. 18 letter, the IBS noted that its ongoing work has been conducted "in accordance with its own guidelines and the guidelines established by the International Forum of Bible Agencies," which encompasses "18 of the leading global translation ministries, including IBS, Wycliffe Bible Translators, United Bible Societies, Summer

Institute of Linguistics (SIL), New Tribes Mission and others ... responsible for more than 90 percent of the translation work done around the world [and seeking to do] uncompromisingly accurate translations in contemporary language."

The IBS letter did not list the other guidelines nor discuss whether those guidelines address gender-related translation issues. Among the CSG Bible translation guidelines:

- "'Father' ('pater,' 'ab' in the original text) should not be changed to 'parent,' or 'fathers' to 'parents,' or 'ancestors.'"

- "'Son' ('huios,' 'ben') should not be changed to 'child,' or 'sons' ('huioi') to 'children' or 'sons and daughters.' (However, Hebrew 'banim' often means 'children.')"

The Jan. 28 IBS/Zondervan news release noted that the 1984

NIV "will continue to be published in its current form without change, making the TNIV an additional choice in translations alongside the NIV."

Of the IBS/Zondervan announcement of the TNIV, James T. Draper Jr., president of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, stated that "LifeWay is committed to biblical accuracy, as seen in our new translation, The Holman Christian Standard Bible. While the International Bible Society has not specified items from the Colorado Springs Guidelines it finds restrictive, our hope is that they will remain true to accepted evangelical scholarship."

"We have not seen their manuscript and will withhold judgment pending a review of the translation."

Mohler, meanwhile, stated,

"The International Bible Society's withdrawal from the Colorado Springs Guidelines is very disappointing, but not really unexpected. Rumbblings of IBS discontent with the guidelines started almost as soon as the [CSG] document was released."

"Many of us feared that the IBS was simply waiting for the earlier controversy to die down so they could go ahead with their plans. It seems that this is the case. They are counting on concerned evangelicals to have short memories."

Mohler described the IBS withdrawal from the Colorado Springs Guidelines as "a retreat from a worthy agreement."

"Since the TNIV is not yet available for review, no immediate conclusions can be drawn about the translation," Mohler stated, but because the IBS cited the CSG gender-related guidelines in withdrawing from the accord, Mohler said "it is fair to assume that they intend to release a gender-inclusive translation."

Ken Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, also voiced caution about any attempt to bring Scripture in line with the ever-changing culture.

## Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx  
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DLETFB T HOB KANG  
BGK, CSGHGLDLE HSOFF  
AGN ELQLTDL NSL  
UTARZGJ GX RGZ OH O  
FTNNFL QSTFZ, SL HSOFF  
AGN LANLE NSLELTA.

JOEU NLA: XTXNLLA

Clue: Q = C

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Ten: Twenty-Nine.

## New missionaries



International Mission Board (IMB) President Jerry Rankin (left) and the audience at Shades Mountain Church in Birmingham, Ala., applaud 63 new overseas workers appointed by the IMB on Jan. 22. For in-depth coverage of the appointment service, please turn to page four of this issue. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)

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**MARSHALL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION** is accepting resumes for Director of Missions. Send resumes to: Search Committee, Marshall Baptist Association, 3555 AL Hwy. 69 W, Guntersville, AL 35976. Deadline: March 1, 2002.

**KENSINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH** is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resume with salary history to Kensington Baptist Church, 4945 Winchester Rd., Memphis, TN 38118. Attention Dale Stone.

## MS POSITIONS AVAILABLE

**CHURCH AVERAGING 100** in Sunday School seeks full-time associate pastor/minister of music and youth. Please send resume to Calvary Baptist Church, 2878 Old Hwy. 27, Vicksburg, MS 39180; or fax to (601) 636-7574.

**MONTICELLO BAPTIST CHURCH** is seeking a preschool/daycare director. Interested applicants must fill out an employment application which is available from the church office. Applicants must also submit a resume. Send resume to Monticello Baptist Church, P.O. Box 814, Monticello, MS 39654. For employment application, call (601) 587-2114.

**BAYOU VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH,** Gulfport, is seeking a part-time children's minister. A heart for children a must. Contact church office at (228) 863-2482 or www.bayouview.org.

**ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH, BRANDON,** is seeking a minister of music. The church is located on Highway 43 South between Pelahatchie and Puckett. Please submit resume to: Antioch Baptist Church, 2350 Highway 43 South, Brandon, MS 39042.

**MAIN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH,** Goodman, Miss., is seeking a bivocational or full-time pastor. Please send resume to: Pastor Search Committee, Main Street Baptist Church, P.O. Box 206, Goodman, MS 39079-0206.

**WEST ELLISVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH** is seeking a full-time Minister of Music and Education. Responsibilities include: leading worship and all adult and youth choirs; overseeing directors and music programs for preschool and children's departments; and overseeing and implementing education programs for the church. Interested applicants please send a resume to West Ellisville Baptist Church, Attention: Melinda Bradshaw, Music Search Committee Chairman, 1108 Avenue B, Ellisville, MS 39437.



## THROW OPEN THE DOOR?

Editor:

The January 18 issue of The Clarion-Ledger tells us that a church affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has installed the first woman pastor in the history of our state convention. We are told, "No opposition is expected by the Mississippi Baptist Convention." When "church autonomy" is used as an excuse for allowing churches who call women pastors to stay in our convention, then we must allow churches to stay in that affirm homosexual unions, worship "mother god," or teach that Christ is not necessary for salvation. To say that the convention can do nothing is to throw the door open to any and every belief that might follow. This is a misuse of the principle of church autonomy.

All churches can believe and practice anything they wish and we cannot object, but when they bring their beliefs into our associations and conventions then they are trampling our beliefs. Then our associations and conventions do have the right and responsibility to disassociate themselves from them.

Bible believing Christians cannot surrender their convictions. They should never be asked to unify themselves with false teaching. It is better to be divided by truth than united in error. How far are we willing to go before we decide that we can no longer be in voluntary cooperation with these churches? Without biblical standards, we perish. Now, maybe we can see the need for the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

Frances L. Bishop,  
Maben

*Editor's note: The Clarion-Ledger headline mentioned in this letter, "No opposition is expected by the Mississippi Baptist Convention" was poorly written and did not reflect any comments included in the article. Nowhere in the article did a convention spokesman say that there would be no opposition.*

## BIBLE IS GUIDE

Editor:

The Bible is our guide; it tells us about Jesus. The angels are watching to see if we will be a people submissive to God and his Word (1 Cor. 11:10-13).

We love having godly ladies serve the Lord in our churches, but does the Bible give direction and instruction concerning the selection of ladies as pastors?

In 1 Tim. 2:12, ladies are not to teach in authority over men. In 1 Tim. 3, men are to be the churches' elder leaders and pastors. Southern Baptist Christians have believed and followed this for two centuries.

I hope the state convention will ask any Baptist churches

that consider having women pastors to reconsider their unbiblical leanings.

David Howell, pastor  
Bethel Church, Brandon

## NO WORD BATTLES

Editor:

Your January 10 Guest Opinion writer Caby Byrne states, "Word battles are going on between International Mission Board (IMB) President Jerry Rankin and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Missions leader Keith Parks...." I challenge anyone to show me one statement or article from Jerry Rankin that goes beyond clarifying statements issued about IMB that were intended to misrepresent, confuse, damage, and take support away from the International Mission Board. Jerry Rankin did not initiate such interchanges.

Bill Morgan, Strategist,  
IMB Church Services  
Richmond, Va.

## THE CLEANSING BLOOD

Editor:

I see where certain denominations are attempting to combine Christian, Jewish, and Islamic verses into one devotional handbook. Well, let me once again reemphasize that these three religions do not worship the same God.

Christians do not devote their time to Mohammed; neither do we pray to Allah. Muslims do not devote their time to Jesus; neither do they worship the Jehovah God. Christians do not sing "Muhammad saves," neither do Jews or Muslims sing "Jesus Saves." I do not pray to Allah; neither do I worship Mohammed.

I believe in the lineage of Isaac, not Ishmael. Jesus is more than a prophet and a good person; he is the Son of Jehovah God, my Lord and Savior.

Esau sold his birthright to Jacob and it seems some of the professing Christians are doing the same. It is a shame in the face of God to allow Muslim ministers into those pulpits, once dedicated to the furtherance of Christ's teachings and the salvation of lost souls through the blood of Jesus, Jehovah God's only begotten Son. That blood can cleanse all shame and sin.

Charles R. Emerson  
Ocean Springs

## THANKS FOR VEHICLE

Editor:

We recently came to the U.S. for our son's wedding and stayed one month. What a blessing it was for us to be able to use a vehicle from the Macedonian Call Foundation of Mississippi!

The foundation seeks to provide reliable transportation to

International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries while they are in the U.S. for stateside assignment or vacation. This was the second time that we used a vehicle from the Foundation, and both times we got just the right car for our needs.

We would like to express our thanks to the Macedonian Call Foundation for maintaining this ministry to missionaries. We would also like to encourage churches and individuals to consider supporting the foundation.

Contact the Macedonian Call Foundation at P.O. Box 156, Ridgeland, MS 39158 to find out how you can participate in this outstanding ministry to IMB missionaries.

John & Kathy Vaughn  
Caxias do Sul, Brazil  
Brazil

## THANKS FOR HELP

Editor:

I recently wrote a story about New Life Church in Kinglsey, Iowa, for Baptist Press, which your paper published. We were appreciative of the coverage. There were many volunteers from Mississippi and Arkansas who came to western Iowa in the past few years and helped construct the church building there.

I recently learned that there were Mississippi Baptists from associations other than the one that I mentioned in the story, who helped with the project prior to the mission trip that I was covering. I did not mean to leave them out of the story, but my report was primarily focusing on one particular mission trip of which I was aware at the time.

The pastor of the New Life Baptist Church had provided a list of all the churches involved in an e-mail to me, but I chose not to use all the information.

For the record, I would also like to mention that there were volunteers and long-term financial support for this project from Pearl River, Jackson, George-Greene, Lebanon, Lamar, Tri-County, and Gulf Coast Associations in Mississippi.

Two Arkansas associations helped out with the project as well: Pulaski Association (the Rock Builders) and the Arkansas Valley Association.

This church is so appreciative of the assistance that has been provided by individuals, churches, and associations in the southern states. May the Lord be praised for the ministry that is taking place here in Iowa as a result.

Richard Nations, Editor  
The Iowa Baptist  
Des Moines, IA

## ANOTHER APPROACH

Editor:

The Dec. 11 edition of Associated Baptist Press included an article noting that "Paul Pressler's book [A Hill on

Which to Die] highlighting the conservative side of the battle for control of the Southern Baptist Convention is being sent to about 42,000 pastors."

Readers may be interested to know that the Baptist History and Heritage Society has a book that offers another approach to the subject: Slayden Yarbrough's work, Southern Baptists: A Historical, Ecclesiological, and Theological Heritage of a Confessional People. Yarbrough, retired Dickinson Professor of Religion at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, now resides in Denver, Colorado.

For additional information about the book and other Baptist History and Heritage Society materials on the subject, contact the society at P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, TN 37024-0728. Telephone: (800) 966-2278. Email: cdeweese@tnbaptist.org. Website: www.baptisthistory.org.

Charles Deweese, Exec. Dir.  
Baptist History & Heritage  
Society, Brentwood, Tenn.

## MODERN PHARAOHS

Editor:

In the process of preparing the Sanctity of Human Life lesson January 20 the Holy Spirit opened the Word to us like never before.

In the story of Pharaoh and Moses, we can find God's plan of protection for his children when the "pharaohs" of this world declare that the unborn are not persons. Has our "pharaoh" of pleasure and convenience not done the same thing through abortion in the womb, partial-birth abortion, and euthanasia?

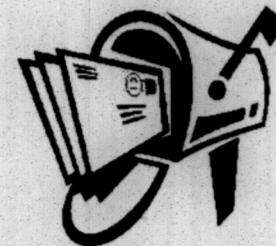
God's plan for the protection of his little ones is plain. Like Pharaoh's daughter, America must recognize the fact that the fruit of the womb is a baby! Secondly, brothers and sisters in Christ must become "Miriams" and intervene with real choices. Finally, adoption is the answer.

What would America be like today if Southern Baptists across America had provided birthing homes for those 40-plus million pregnant, frightened mothers? How many of these moms, dads, and precious creations of God would be eternally bound for heaven?

Is it possible that we have missed the chance to share the healing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with more than 130 million Americans who have been touched by abortion?

When we know the right thing to do and do it not, we sin. Is it not time to put up or shut up? These ladies don't need lectures. They need love. They need the option of adoption. Southern Baptists should support all efforts toward this end with our time, talents, tithes, and prayers.

Robert Lightsey  
Laurel



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.*

*Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.*

*Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)*

*Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.*

*Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.*

*No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.*

*When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.*



## FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

### Disrespect to respect

1 Peter 2:13-21; 3:1-2, 7, 14-16

By J. Michael Barnett

His words were a little irritating when I was 13 years old and pitching strikes was my goal for living. The irritating words were from my dad who said, "The umpire is right even when he's wrong."

Or how about these words that my parents told me often? "If you get in trouble at school you will be in trouble at home." Yes, these words seemed unfair when I was pitching baseball and going to school, but they are the same words my children hear from me. I desire to teach them the same thing my parents taught me, the doctrine of authority.

Perhaps more so now than when I was growing up, the doctrine of authority is often ignored. There is definitely an

anti-authority undercurrent in our nation that is very obvious.

Whether it is parents who will not support a teacher's discipline of their child, harsh and profane words shouted to a referee or umpire at the kid's ball game, cheating on income tax, ignoring policies of an organization or church, or just plain old-fashioned defiance, authority is something many people resist.

As with every issue the Word of God speaks loud and clear concerning authority. 1 Peter 2:13-3:22 gives instruction concerning respecting authority.

Three areas where God has ordained authority in specific places are discussed. First God speaks of the authority of government. His instruction is to "be subject" to human institu-

tions. The word "subject" means to "be arranged under," or "place oneself under authority." The reason is that God has ordained the position and the purpose of government.

Government is given the responsibilities of punishing the evil and rewarding the good (1

Pet. 2:14). Submission to government authority will empower believers to silence false accusers and freely be the servants of God. Of course there will be governments that persecute believers.

In such a case, the words spoken by the apostles in Acts 5:29 when they were ordered by ruling factions to quit fulfilling the Great Commission, but Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men," are to be applied.

Secondly, the Lord gives us instruction concerning authority in the work place (1 Pet. 2:18-21). In his act of creation, God ordained that man should work for his provision.

The work ethic of Scripture is not limited to a hard day's work; it also calls for an honorable day's work. This word to servants and masters can be applied to employees and employers. We are to give respect to our employers. If we suffer in the work place because of our testimony for Jesus it is a gracious thing in God's sight.

The Lord also instructs us concerning the authority structure in the home (1 Pet. 3:1-7). The Scripture is clear, the husband is the God ordained authority in the home. Wives are to be submissive to their husbands.

What is unclear is the perverse application of this text. The Baptist Faith and Message interprets this principle as follows: The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image.

The marriage relationship models the way God relates to his people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-

given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family.

A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. The wife who follows this precept concerning her role in the home will see her husband grow spiritually and mature in the Lord (1 Pet. 3:2-7).

Respect for authority is a capstone of Christian living and testimony. In 1 Peter 2:13 we are told to submit to governmental authority "for the Lord's sake."

In 1 Peter 2:21 we are told that submission to authority is following Christ's example. In 1 Peter 3:15 respect for authority manifests that Christ is set apart in our hearts. In this day and age of little respect for authority it is paramount that believers follow Jesus' example and recognize God's ordained authority structure in every area of life.

Barnett is pastor of First Church, Ocean Springs.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Living with others in covenant life

Deuteronomy 17:8-26:19

By Carleen McGraw

In order to live together, people in any society or culture need laws; boundaries that limit their actions, for "sin is not taken into account when there is no law" (Rom. 7:13), and "... through the law we become conscious of sin" (Rom. 3:20b), "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

In our study of Deuteronomy, it is obvious that the Lord knew that laws governing his people were necessary if they were to live together in peace.

In chapter 17, instructions are given on how to handle difficult cases in court, and on how a king was to be chosen when the

people settled in and decided they needed a king like other nations.

In chapter 18, details are given concerning the Priest and Levites, and warnings against practicing the detestable ways of the nations they were dispossessing were issued. Even their own prophets were to be proven before their messages were accepted.

In chapter 19, "cities of refuge" were to be set up for the benefit of one who "kills his neighbor unintentionally, without malice aforethought" (v. 4b). In v. 15, note that "one witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have

committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

Chapter 20 deals with several aspects of entering war. They were not to be afraid "because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you" (v. 4).

In chapter 21, Moses deals with atonement for an unsolved murder, marrying a captive woman, rights of the firstborn, a rebellious child, etc.

In chapter 22, being a helpful neighbor is emphasized. If a brother's animal should stray onto the neighbor's property, the neighbor is not to ignore it, but take it back to its owner; if it is an animal whose owner he does not know, he is to keep it until its owner comes inquiring about it, then give it back to him.

If one should see a neighbor's animal "fallen on the road," he is to help it to its feet. Respect for a neighbor's property makes for better community living.

Still in the preservation of life category, verse 8 may sound strange to us, but given the flat-roofed architecture of ancient Israelite buildings, and the extensive use of the roof as a place of relaxation, work, etc., we can see that it would be practical not only in the preservation of life, but in the fact that if someone should fall and die from the fall, the owner could be guilty of involuntary manslaughter.

Beginning in 22:9 and through 23:18, laws of purity are reviewed. In 23:24, 25 it is evident that hospitality to ones neighbors was common in the Near East.

You could feel free to quench your appetite while walking through the field of a fellow Israelite, but you were not to carry away any of the produce in a basket. Centuries later, Jesus and his disciples took advantage of this courtesy when they were hungry while passing through a field of grain.

In chapter 24:6, we find that millstones for grinding were an important part of providing

food. Each Israelite home was equipped with a small milling machine. The grain was used to prepare the bread. To take either the whole mill, or even a part of it, was to take away life itself since it would deprive a family of their daily bread.

In verses 14-15, God made provision for the "poor and needy" whether Israelite or alien. In this case the laborer evidently lived hand to mouth, and he needed his pay at the end of the day in order to feed his family. They were to be sure to pay him, and to keep in mind that they once were slaves in Egypt.

Moses concluded these miscellaneous instructions through chapters 25 and 26, and in the last verses of chapter 26, reminded the people that they were to observe these "statutes and judgments" so "that you may be a holy people to the Lord your God." Christians today are always to be examples to the world of the grace and mercy of God.

McGraw is a member of First Church, Louisville.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats,



no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.



# PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES



for Christian Living

Volume 2

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN ACTION COMMISSION OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Issue 1

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## Loving One Another

On December 21, 2001, a clay model of the sculpture "Flag Raising at Ground Zero" was unveiled in Brooklyn, New York. The statue has come under fire from various critics because the three white firefighters in the original photograph have been transformed into one white, one black, and one Hispanic.

The issue seems rather clear, "Do you distort the picture to be politically correct?" or "Do you ignore the fact that other races were both victims and heroes at Ground Zero?"

Marshall Ramsey, in his Sunday, September 16, 2001 cartoon in *The Clarion Ledger*, depicted the mood of most Americans after the September 11 terrorist attack.

One side of his cartoon pictured a group of people, who before September 11, were declaring their diversity — black, white, conservative, liberal, Yankee, and Southerner. On the opposite side of the cartoon were the same people, who after September 11, were saying, "I am American."

This tragedy pulled us together momentarily, but as time moves us farther from that tragic date in history, the spirit of unity that reigned supreme for a few weeks is now giving way to the resurgence of familiar prejudices, biases, hatreds, discriminations, and indifferences.

Questions abound: "Why can't we live in peace and harmony with all men?"; "Why is there such tension between people of different colors?"; "Why do extreme religious groups hate Americans and Christianity?"

Jesus spoke to the issue when he said, "... listen and understand. What goes into a man's mouth does not make him unclean, but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him unclean" (Matthew 15:10-11, NIV).

He further stated in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander." Simply put, we have a heart problem. America has a heart problem. The world has a heart problem.

There is a rising tide of hatred in the United States as we are home to 602 hate groups, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, 10 percent more than in 1999.

The most prevalent are: Neo-Nazi - 180; the Ku Klux Klan - 110; Neo-Confederate - 88; Black Separatist - 48; Racist Skinhead - 39; and Christian Identity - 32. In 1999 hate crimes led to 17 homicides in the United States.

The FBI logged 7,876 biased-motivated crimes — more than half based on race and about one-third spurred by sexual or religious prejudices (U.S. News and World Report, 4/2/2001).

Racial hate crimes continue to trouble our nation who prides itself in providing freedom and equal opportunities to all. A racial hate crime is a criminal offense motivated in whole or part by the offender's membership in a certain racial or ethnic group.

Of the hate crimes reported by the police in 1998, 792 were against whites, 2,901 were against blacks, 293 were against Asians, and 482 were against Hispanics (Life Light, SBC, The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC)).

Dr. Ben Mitchell, consultant for ERLC, says, "Racism is hatred of God's handiwork and is sinful rebellion against God's design." Dr. Mitchell suggests that

God in his wisdom chose to perpetuate the earth through one family. God also brought the Lord Jesus Christ through that same race of humans.

He emphatically states, "For any of us to hate another person or to discriminate against them because of their color or ethnic background is like shaking our fist in God's face and saying, 'I don't like the way you made the human race.' This is sinful rebellion, and we must repent and confess such sin" (Life Light, SBC, ERLC).

Dr. Billy Graham in his article, "Racism and The Evangelical Church," stated, "Racial and ethnic hostility is the foremost social problem facing our world today.

From the systematic horror of ethnic cleansing to the random violence ravaging our inner cities, our world seems caught up in a tidal wave of racial and ethnic tension."

Dr. Graham said Christians who harbor racism in their attitudes or actions are not following the Lord at this point. Jesus came to bring reconciliation not only between man and God but also between every human being.

Racial tension did not die on September 11, 2001, as the World Trade Center fell. For a brief moment our pain and agony made us a family of one, but only the timeless

truth from another tragedy 2,000 years ago on a cross can replace hatred and indifference with love and active compassion.

The issues are complex, confusing, and challenging. Wishing them to go away is not a solution. As Christians we have been assigned the ministry of reconciliation.

A passionate father once said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." That's the same thing any caring father would desire for his children.

This same father believed in that dream and once said, "I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become reality. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word" (Excerpts from Dr. Martin Luther King).

Sunday, February 10, 2002, is designated Race Relations Day within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Many churches will be emphasizing race relations and reconciliation. Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34, NIV).

May he help us do just that!!!

If you are interested in receiving Christian Action updates via the internet and will share this information with friends and your church, please e-mail us at rwood@mbcb.org.

Include your name, address, phone number, and church name.



Porter





# 2002 STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

January 21-22 • Colonial Heights Baptist Church, Jackson

**SINGING CHURCHMEN** — The Mississippi Singing Churchmen perform at the January 22 evening session of the Mississippi State Evangelism Conference at Colonial Heights Church, Jackson. The group is led by L. Graham Smith, director of church music for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

**SHARING A LAUGH** — Gene Henderson (left), pastor of First Church, Brandon, and Allen Stephens (center), missions director for Rankin Association, share a light moment with S.A. "Sonny" Adkins, evangelism director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, after a session of the 2002 Mississippi State Evangelism Conference. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

**RETURNING HOME** — Len Turner, vocational evangelist from Woodstock, Ga., shares a lighter moment with the conferees at the Mississippi State Evangelism Conference January 21-22. Turner once pastored at Colonial Heights, the host church for the conference. (Photo by Tony Martin)

**WELCOME TO MISSISSIPPI** — Jo (center) and Dale Patterson (right) greet Mac Brunson, senior pastor of First Church, Dallas, Tex., after the January 22 evening session of the 2002 Mississippi State Evangelism Conference. The Pattersons are members of First Church, Jackson, and Dale is currently serving as a trustee of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

**BY THE BOOK** — Fred Lowery, pastor of First Church, Bossier City, La., shares his sermon text with the conferees of the Mississippi State Evangelism Conference at Colonial Heights Church, Jackson, January 21-22. (Photo by Tony Martin)

**CATCHING UP** — Jean Adkins (left), wife of Mississippi Baptist Convention Board Evangelism Director S.A. "Sonny" Adkins, talks with Debbie Brunson, wife of First Church, Dallas, senior pastor Mac Brunson, after a session of the 2002 Mississippi State Evangelism Conference at Colonial Heights Church, Jackson. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

**MAKING A POINT** — Junior Hill, evangelist from Hartselle, Ala., enthralls the conferees during the Mississippi State Evangelism Conference January 21-22 with his trademark warmth and humor. (Photo by Tony Martin)

**A BAPTIST STATESMAN** — Nelson Price, pastor Emeritus of the Roswell Street Church, Marietta, Ga., shares eloquently during the 2002 Mississippi State Evangelism Conference January 21-22. Price is a native of Osyka. (Photo by Tony Martin)